

# THE JOURNAL



## OF THE PACIFIC COAST NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

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### CONTENTS

Calendar of Events ..... 2

President's Message ..... 3

#### World Numismatics

An Introduction to Renaissance Portrait Medals ..... 6

Arrowheads and Ping-Pong Balls ..... 20

#### U.S. Numismatics

The Liberty Goddess to Marry ..... 4

Philippines Currency Under U.S. Sovereignty ..... 14

Book Review: Standard Catalog of U.S. Tokens ..... 17

#### The West

The Union Forever ..... 10

Advertisers ..... 22-24

# PACIFIC COAST NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

• Founded 1915 •

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## CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

January 25, 1995, Wednesday at 8:00 PM: 946TH MEETING

*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*

February 22, 1995, Wednesday, 8:00 PM: 947TH MEETING

*George Washington & Numismatics*

March 22, 1995, Wednesday at 8:00 PM: 948TH MEETING

*Special presentation by numismatic author Anthony Swiatek*

Meetings are held the 4TH Wednesday of the month at 8:00 PM

**The Knights of Columbus Hall in San Francisco**

2800 Taraval Avenue (1 BLOCK WEST OF SUNSET).

*Guests Welcome.*

Board Business Meetings are at 7:15, before the regular meetings.



# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

STEPHEN M. HUSTON

## *Without a Net*

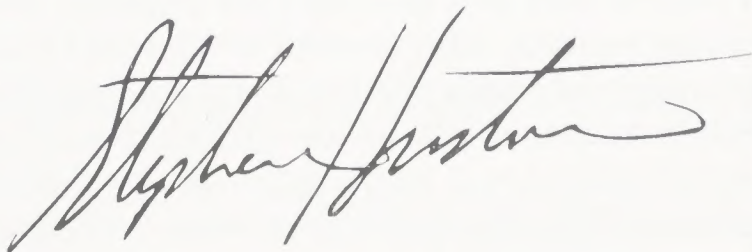
I recently entered a coin shop in a small town in another state and was immediately reminded of the horrors which confront many new coin collectors. The shop had one counter devoted to coins, one of those once-enticing rotating shelf contraptions with a hodgepodge of recent U.S. coins, assorted foreign minors, the odd medal and various key-chain items aimed at tourists to the area.

This reminded me of my first visit to a coin shop at about age ten—a shop in a tourist area with a never-changing stock aimed solely at one-shot sales. Years later, I found numerous such shops spread out in small-town America. Many shops, especially those in tourist towns, seemed to rely on one-time buyers, and their stock was basically unchanging, simply replacing whatever sold with another one of the same.

For the average casual collector of coins in this country, especially those in rural or small towns, that is a typical coin shop. I can recall the frustration of trying to find needed coins for my collection in these places, and trying to get answers to anything not in the *Red Book* was an exercise in futility.

As a member of PCNS or any other numismatic society, collectors suddenly have contacts, information and access to knowledgeable people to rescue them from this situation. The support provided by a numismatic group includes information, assistance, and usually even sources of new material far in excess of what typical collectors could hope to encounter on their own.

Remember to take part in your numismatic groups both to benefit from the support and to provide assistance to those who can learn from you. Without that mutual support, we are all collecting *without a net*.





## *The Liberty Goddess to Marry*

(from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 10, 1896)

The Goddess of Liberty, whose profile is graven on the silver dollar, was designed by Morgan, the engraver employed by the Director of the Mint to make the die, from the face of Anna W. Williams, a Philadelphia school teacher. The Chicago Times-Herald excites new interest in her by announcing that she is about to be married.

It is twenty years since the pretty blonde girl became world famous. It was then stated, says the Times-Herald, that Miss Williams' profile was the original of the Goddess of Liberty on that much-abused, much-admired and equally much-disliked Bland silver dollar. The friends of the young woman placed every obstacle in the way of possible identification, but failed in their object. The story of how Miss Williams came to be the Goddess of Liberty may be retold, now that it said she is soon to become a bride.

In the early part of 1876 the Treasury Department secured, through communication with the royal Mint of England, the services of a clever young designer and engraver named George Morgan. Upon his arrival in this country Mr. Morgan was installed in the Philadelphia Mint and was assigned the task of making a design for a new silver dollar. After many months of labor the young engraver completed the design for the reverse side of the coin, upon which he represented the American eagle. His attention was then turned to the other side, and his original inclination was to place on it a fanciful head representing the Goddess of Liberty. But the ambitious designer was too much of a realist to be satisfied with a mere product of fancy. Finally he determined the head should be the representation of some American girl, and forthwith diligently searched for his maid.

It was a long search, although pleasant. He told his friends of his desire, and one of them spoke of the classic beauty of Miss Anna Williams. The English designer was introduced to the girl. Mr. Morgan was at once impressed by her beautiful face and studied it carefully. Then he told her what he desired, and she promptly refused to permit herself to be the subject of the design. Her friends, however, induced her to pose before an artist. After five sittings the design was completed. Mr. Morgan was so enthusiastic that he declared Miss Williams' profile was the most nearly perfect he had ever seen. His design for the Bland dollar was accepted by Congress, and so the silver coins have been pouring from the mints all these years adorned with a stately face of a Quaker City maiden. Miss Williams is a decidedly modest young woman. She resided on Spring Garden street, not far from the school in which for years she has been employed as an instructor in philosophy and mathematics in the kindergarten department. She carries her figure with a stateliness rarely seen, and the pose of her head is exactly as seen on the silver dollar. The features of Miss Williams are reproduced as faithfully as in a good photograph.





She is slightly below the average height, is rather plump and fair with blue eyes. Her nose is Grecian, and her hair, which is almost her crowning glory, is golden in color, abundant in quantity and of wonderful lightness of texture, the soft coil in which it is worn being especially becoming.



*As she frequently remarked when she made any such mistake, it would all be the same a hundred years hence.*

—Charles Dickens, 1812–1870  
(from *Nicholas Nickleby*)



# *From the Idle Mind of Stephen M. Huston*

## *An Introduction to Renaissance Portrait Medals:*

### *from the Black Death to the Fall of Constantinople*

IN 1348, THE BLACK DEATH SWEEPED ALONG THE EASTERN TRADE ROUTES FROM CHINA AND India into the Mediterranean, up through Italy and into Western Europe, reaching England by 1349. It was the worst plague in history, leaving roughly one-third of the entire population of the European world dead of causes beyond contemporary understanding. As the 1350s began, Europe faced changes which no one anticipated, but which were unavoidable following the plague.

This largest single drop in population ever recorded brought with it previously unimagined shortages of manpower at the same time that huge amounts of labor were needed to rebuild the economy, which was primarily agricultural in most regions. Tangible assets had not declined, nor had the availability of arable land, but labor was suddenly at a premium. The result was a spectacular rise in wages, often 50%, but in some areas more than doubling in a very short time. Land was plentiful, so food could be produced for a smaller population more easily in theory. However, agriculture still required manpower at the old levels, and it was no longer available.

Inherited wealth more than tripled the number of people who were considered wealthy, while the previously-wealthy inherited additional goods and land during the plague, becoming wealthier than any previous nobles outside of the royal courts.

Prices skyrocketed, as did wages. Peasants chose to leave the land for better-paying work in the towns. Cultivation declined as food prices dropped—it was cheaper to import food than to grow it locally where populations had been heavily hit. The death rate during the plague years had exceeded two-thirds in some regions!

All of this brought about a shift away from agriculture in large areas where it had been dominant. Those already above the poverty level benefited, but the lot of the very poor declined as agricultural prices fell. Wealth was drained away from agricultural regions in exchange for imported food and luxury goods, for which demand reached new heights. This was due in part to the new wealth of the townsfolk and in part was a psychological reaction to having survived the Black Death.

One region of Europe benefited consistently from the economic aftermath of the plague—Northern Italy. Its own agriculture had never been adequate for its towns, so they already had developed an extensive international trade. Now, with the lower population, local agriculture was nearly adequate, improving their balance of payments for food without hurting local agricultural prices since there was still no surplus.

The Italian cities which had already established international trade



benefited from the new needs of towns to their north in Europe to obtain food and goods from beyond their old sources. The Italians made a nice profit on this vastly increased trade.

The Italian city states of the early 1400s were wealthy as no region in Europe had been for more than a thousand years. This wealth became concentrated in the hands of the nobility which controlled trade, the merchants which handled it, and the artisans who supplied new luxury goods.

This set the economic stage for the Renaissance in Italy. The Black Death concentrated the wealth of Europe in Italy for its nobility and artisans to use to their own ends. One of these ends, a reaction to having survived the plague, was the hope of creating something lasting—a bit of immortality for themselves.

The Renaissance portrait medal became both a product of this desire for immortality and a new art form which eventually changed coinage. At first, however, it was unrelated to coinage. The subjects portrayed were members of wealthy families, seeking immortality and proclaiming their own glory or self-assurance. The artists were painters who chose miniature sculpture in the round as a lasting medium. Discoveries of Roman coins were being introduced to the nobility as part of the growth in learning and study of the past which flourished in this period, providing evidence of the long-term survival of medallic portraiture.

The most famous artist of the medal was Pisanello, who always described himself as a painter, even on his medals! Pisanello produced the first round medallic portraits of Italian nobility, and he used the medal to describe the qualities of the subject as well as to portray them, often via allegorical reverse types.



The medal shown here is a contemporary portrait of Pisanello, the medalist/painter himself, but it was not done by him. In fact, the artist is unknown. Still, it is of the greatest significance that the artist who created the



Renaissance portrait medal was portrayed in that medium, and we know his likeness from this work.



The other portrait medal is of Mohammed II, conqueror of the Byzantine Empire at Constantinople in 1453. Shown above at 50% of its actual size of 4.75 inches, it was made by Constanzo de Ferrara during a visit to Constantinople following Mohammed's victory. The continued taking of territories in the Balkans resulted in the mix of cultures and peoples which now provide a major part of our international news. The Serbs, Croats, and Moslems continue to fight over the region they have unwillingly shared since Mohammed's troops arrived after 1453.

The conquest of Constantinople provided the next great thrust of Renaissance cultural growth as the wealth and libraries of this ancient capitol flowed into Europe in the hands of fleeing exiles. The libraries and art which arrived from Constantinople just before and following 1453, introduced a level of culture previously unknown to most of Europe. It could be said that the Black Death and the Fall of Constantinople were two of the most significant forces behind the Renaissance.

Our final Renaissance medal is a moralistic curiosity. Described as *Death and Vanity*, it was a reminder that in spite of the glories of life and the flesh, all will pass. This medal, done in 1612, by Jan de Vos at Prague to mark the death of Emperor Rudolph II, reads in Latin:

*Do not Boast of the Morrow / Be mindful that Death does not delay.*

Curiously, the model for the figure of *Vanity*, the beautiful woman, was one of the Emperor's mistresses—immortalized in a portrait intended to remind the viewer that no one is immortal!





*Death and Vanity*

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# San Francisco Through Its Exonumia

by Jerry F. Schimmel



## THE UNION FOREVER

The Confederate plot to capture San Francisco looked like a good bet in 1862. Support for the South ran as high as forty percent according to some estimates. California's Congressional delegation favored secession from the Union and proposed to set up an independent republic in the West, one that would not turn a deaf ear to rebel appeals for aid.

Encouraged by local secessionists, a young Kentuckian, Asbury Harpending, went east and south on foot through Mexican jungles, and aboard ship through federal blockades to get an audience with Jefferson Davis. By the time he returned in 1863, with a commission in the Confederate Navy, sentiment in California had shifted to the northern cause.

A walk through San Francisco's downtown revealed the word "Union" everywhere—Union Hotel, Union Bakery, Union Barber Shop, Union Haberdashery, a Union College, Union Theatre, Union Street and Union Square. On May 30, 1863, Union Hall opened officially. Among its first gatherings was a statewide convention to dump incumbent Senators and Members of Congress and nominate men who would support Lincoln.

Union Hall, then the largest convention center in the state, covered 9400 square feet of meeting space. It fronted on the south side of Howard Street, a few doors west of Third Street, and extended through the block to the Tehama Street alley. Built by Colonel Peter Donahue, President of the Omnibus Railroad Company, it had two stories, the upper boasting a thirty foot ceiling. A carbarn for the horsedrawn streetcars and animals took up the ground floor. Three center doors on Howard Street provided entry for the omnibuses. Twin doorways at the right and left opened to the second floor stairs.

In the 1860s, South-of-Market was fashionable, Third Street its main thoroughfare. Three and one-half blocks away lay South Park with its English-style formal gardens and homes for the wealthy.

Social functions for the upper crust were booked into the new edifice. The Pennsylvania Steam Fire Company, one of the city's leading volunteer fire units, organized the building's inaugural ball. Military and semi-military units vied to put on showy affairs—the National Guard, the Bunker Hill



Association for Relief of Wounded Soldiers, San Francisco Light Guard, the Second Irish Regiment, and the First Regiment of the California State Militia. Officers from a visiting Russian fleet paid \$100 each to attend a ball in their own honor, all proceeds benefiting Union war wounded.

Civilian societies sponsored more events. The Society of California Pioneers, the Eureka Benevolent Association, Odd Fellows and the Hebrew Benevolent Association added themselves to the list. Professor O.A. Lunt established a dancing academy in 1865 and taught social arts to children of the Crockers, DeYoungs, Hearsts, Hopkins and Huntingtons. General U.S. Grant spoke from its platform. William T. Sherman (later General Sherman) officiated at its gatherings, civilian and military. The 1876 U.S. Centennial Ball was conducted on its wide floor. Political conventions became annual affairs. It was considered lucky to be nominated under its roof.

By the 1880s, South-of-Market had passed to the working classes. Selby's brick shot tower, used in the manufacture of ammunition, dominated the streetscape at First and Howard streets. The neighborhood became industrial and decidedly out-of-fashion. Instead of mansions, inexpensive wooden duplex and multi-unit Victorian flats stood in rows. The wealthy fled to the hilltops on the new cable cars, and Professor Lunt rode with them.

In the hall, wrestling matches, prize fights, skating contests and variety theatre acts took the place of hoop skirts, patriotic bunting and waltz orchestras. "Beer became an article of commerce," lamented the *S.F. Chronicle*. In December 1888, Morosco's Grand Theatre moved to the second floor and featured cut-rate vaudeville. By 1896, Union Hall was an abandoned shell, "a cobweb factory," said one reporter. It burned to the ground on the night of May 2, 1898.

#### A SINGLE TOKEN

The only artifact left is a brass token, exactly the size of a U.S. nickel, a product of the hall's declining years. The legend reads "UNION HALL, S.F., GOOD FOR 5¢ IN TRADE." A name like Union Hall sounds common enough, however a search of directories to 1920 reveals no other establishment with the name.

The style of the token resembles those made between 1906 and 1909. Its planchet is rough, and the diesinking is not as fine as tokens made a decade and a half later. Light nicks consistent with slot machine operation are

## A GRAND PROMENADE CONCERT AND SOCIAL PARTY!

WILL BE GIVEN BY THE

### Bunker Hill Association,

AT

### UNION HALL,

HOWARD STREET,

WEDNESDAY EVENING,.....JUNE 17,

IN HONOR OF THE DAY!

The proceeds of which will be devoted to the  
RELIEF OF OUR SICK AND WOUNDED  
SOLDIERS.

AN ORCHESTRA OF FIFTY PIECES, under  
the leadership of J. W. FULLER, has been en-  
gaged; also, a Band to perform between the  
Dance. Mr. Fuller will introduce some entirely  
New Music on this occasion.

Doors open at 7 o'clock; Concert to commence at  
8 and Dancing at 9 precisely.

Single Tickets ..... \$1 00

Tickets admitting one Gentlemen and Ladies 2 00

To be had at the principal Stores, and at the Hall  
during the day and evening of the Concert.





present. The overall condition is Very Fine with luster at the rims.

Nickel-in-the-slot machines came to Frisco in 1893. The substitution of tokens for coins became mandatory in 1897, although they were used in the slots before then. A bar must have been set up in Union Hall for sports and theatre events, the most likely site for one or more of the gadgets. A foyer outside the performing area may have been fitted with others. Without further information, it's reasonable to think that the token was issued between 1893 and 1898—more likely before 1896.

#### EPILOGUE

Asbury Harpending learned to his disappointment that only he, Ridgley Greathouse and Alfred Rubery were willing to finance a secessionist enterprise. They outfitted a fast schooner, the *J.M. Chapman*, as a privateer to waylay Pacific Mail steamers and build a small navy. The U.S. warship



*Cyane* intercepted them in September 1863, sailing out of the Golden Gate, and towed their vessel to Fort Alcatraz, where the lot of them were tossed in the guardhouse. A ten-year jail sentence was commuted by President Lincoln in 1865 under his post-Civil War amnesty.

Fittingly, the city's largest meeting facility now covers the site of Union Hall—Moscone Convention Center.

#### **TOKEN DESCRIPTION AND CATALOG DESIGNATIONS**

Brass 21.4mm with plain borders and edge.

O: UNION HALL/ S.F./ (a small, six-point star)

R: GOOD FOR/ 5¢/ IN TRADE (six-point stars as stops)  
(Unlisted by either Album or Kappen)

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"Historic Halls of San Francisco: Reminiscences of Union Hall on Howard Street" in the *S.F. Chronicle*, March 22, 1896.

*Rincon Hill and South Park: San Francisco's Early Fashionable Neighborhood* by Dr. Albert Shumate, 1988.

*San Francisco: Port of Gold* by William Martin Camp, 1947.

"Union Hall Is Burned" in the *S.F. Chronicle*, May 3, 1898.

## **ATTENTION AUTHORS!**

The deadline for the next issue of *The Journal* is  
March 1, 1995.

All copy should be submitted in one of the following formats:

- Typed double-spaced on letter-sized paper, or
- On 3.5" computer disk in Macintosh format with a printout copy as above.

Please submit all material to the editor; see address inside front cover of this issue.



# THE SYNGRAPHICS SCENE

BY KEN BARR.

## Philippines Currency Under U.S. Sovereignty

Many syngraphists, even those with advanced collections, are unaware of the collectability of certain Philippines currency as a part of their United States paper money collection. Between 1903 and 1949, the official currency of the islands was printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP), often convertible to U.S. currency at prevailing rates. This was a result of the United States' administration of the Philippines following the Spanish-American War. The islands' commonwealth status began in 1935 and ended with independence on July 4, 1946. Notes issued 1903-1949 are fine additions to any U.S. syngraphic collections.

There were four basic types of currency issued during this period: Silver Certificates (1903-1918), Treasury Certificates (1918-1949), Philippine National Bank notes (1916-1937) and Bank of the Philippine Islands notes (1908-1933). Each of these series has interesting information related to normal U.S. currency.



The Silver Certificates were the first "small size" United States paper money, issued in a size smaller than the then-current U.S. "horseblankets" to prevent confusion between the two. They proved so successful that regular-issue U.S. notes were converted to this size starting in 1929. Seven series of Silver Certificates were issued, one each in 1903, 1905, 1906, 1908, 1910, 1912 and 1916. Denominations included 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500 pesos, with not all denominations issued in all series. The 2 peso note features Philippine patriot Jose Rizal; the 5 peso depicts William McKinley; the 10 peso shows George Washington; the 20 peso features a view of Mount Mayon; the 50 peso depicts General Henry W. Lawton; the 100 shows Ferdinand Magellan, and the 500 peso features Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, the





first Spanish Colonial Governor. Unfortunately, most of these issues are scarce to rare, as they were withdrawn from circulation in 1918 and replaced by Treasury Certificates. The most inexpensive notes will cost in the \$20 range in low circulated condition, and \$150 and up in AU/CU.

Treasury Certificates were introduced in 1918, to replace the silver certificates. They were issued in the same denominations with designs similar to the silver certificates, with the addition of a 1 peso denomination featuring A. Mabini. Series were issued in 1918, 1924, 1929 (significantly redesigned with color added to further differentiate them from the new U.S. small size notes being introduced), 1936 (reflecting the change to commonwealth status), 1941 and 1944 (overprinted with "VICTORY" to commemorate MacArthur's return). These notes were printed and used after independence in 1946, and actually circulated into the mid 1960s. Fortunately for syngraphists, many were saved in quantity, allowing the most common types to be purchased for under \$1 in low circulated condition, and under \$5 in Crisp Uncirculated. Scarcer types may run several hundred dollars each.

The third type of note is the Philippine National Bank note, issued in several series from 1916-1937. The portraits used were the same as the other series with the exception of Charles A. Conant on the 1 peso and William A. Jones on the 20 pesos. Both of these men were instrumental in the development of the Philippine currency system, Jones being responsible for the congressional act which established the bank. While no 500 peso denomination was issued in this format, emergency conditions forced the local (non-BEP) printing of fractional notes (10, 20 and 50 centavos) in 1917, plus local overprinting of previously-issued Bank of the Philippine Islands notes in 1919. These notes were withdrawn in 1948 and 1949, but fortunately enough were saved to keep them in the under \$2 (circulated) and around \$10 (CU) range today for the most common types.

The final BEP-printed type of Philippine notes are those printed for the Bank of the Philippine Islands. These were significantly different from the previous issues in order to make it clear that these were private bank issues, not backed by the government in any way. The designs were all allegorical in nature, depicting no identifiable persons. Series were issued in 1908 (with Spanish text), 1912, 1920, 1928 and 1933—the latter four with English text.



No 1 peso or 2 peso denominations were issued, but a 200 peso was added. These notes were withdrawn from circulation at the start of World War II, and exist in reasonable quantity today. Some are obtainable for a few dollars circulated, costing up to \$30-\$50 in XF.

Serious syngraphists should consider adding a few of these pieces to their collections. In addition to another portrait of Washington, many of the designs are unique to the Philippines issues and not found on any other U.S. paper money. While a complete set of series, types and denominations would be prohibitively expensive, it should be possible for the prudent collector to acquire one (or preferably four!) of these notes for an interesting addition to any U.S. paper money collection.

#### **REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING**

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## Standard Catalog of United States Tokens 1700-1900

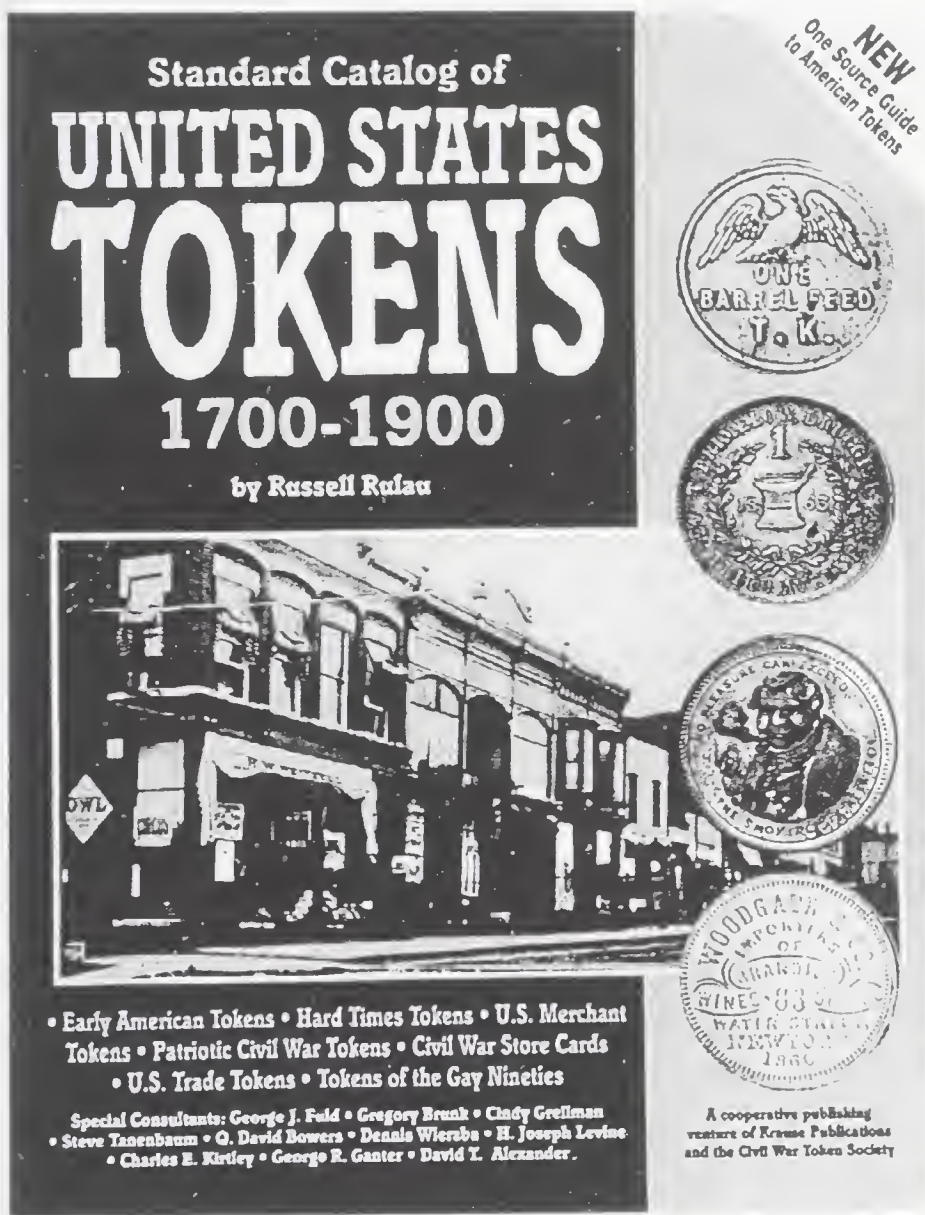
by Russell Rulau

The new Krause Publications catalog contains an enormous amount of information, however major parts of the book lack clarity and organization. The work should have been titled *United States Tokens, Medals, Badges, Miscellaneous Bits, Pieces, Oddments and Curiosities*.

The cover art work attracts and invites the collector, a Krause hallmark. The author's introduction flows smoothly, apparently edited with care. He credits everyone who helped in a long list. (My name is included, although I am not sure why.)

The bibliography is extensive. The index at the end is essential to find anything. The double-column page layout combined with a variety of typefaces slows page-by-page scanning. A price system makes the compilation practical for dealers.

Its seven divisions bear the titles: Early American Tokens, Hard Times Tokens, U.S. Merchant Tokens,



Civil War Store Cards, Patriotic Civil War Tokens, U.S. Trade Tokens, and Tokens of the Gay Nineties.

It combines Rulau's earlier separate works by similar names with two new sections on the Civil War series. The concept of the book is derived from the popular *Standard Catalog of World Coins*. By no means does *United States Tokens* approach the economy of style used in *World Coins*.

Numismatic books prepared by a firm as large as Krause Publications cannot be held to the same standard as those done by small catalogers. The Krause company has financial resources, technical reserves and a distribution network not surpassed in the United States. Anything new from



its pressrooms will have a broad impact, and it has the potential—and the responsibility—to deliver a quality product. For the amount of money and brainpower invested in *United States Tokens*, the result is mediocre.

What damages the book's effectiveness is the inclusion of commemorative medals, convention pieces, key tags, fakes, counterstamped coins, modern issues and more, all lumped together. Entries taken one-by-one may or may not be helpful. Traditional collecting fields such as the mid-19th century merchant storecards are lost in a mass of unrelated exnumia, spread as they are through the third and sixth chapters.

Early American and Hard Times issues appear in a fog of wandering commentaries. New and unformulated series such as counterstamped coins and the Brunswick-Balke-Collendar billiard checks cannot be recognized as collections. On page six Rulau lists eighteen categories upon which the compilation was formed. When fakes and moderns are added, the total comes to twenty.

Three sections, those titled Merchant Tokens, Trade Tokens and the Gay Nineties, are the most ill-defined. At times they look as though the author and publishers were groping for material to fill up space. One can easily conclude that whim and personal preference guided their selection.

On page three the author tells us that a "token is whatever we choose to describe as a token within obvious limitations." The limitations are not enumerated, nor are they obvious. Virtually anything can be a token.

A few examples demonstrate his premise. On page 56 Rulau has included recent issues which borrowed from an Early American Chalmers design. On page 407 he lists a key chain tag, a semi-documented token, and a commemorative. On page 417 there is an award or souvenir medal. On page 629 there is a fake Wells Fargo Bank counterstamp.

The usual American definition of a token is vague enough. The piece should be small and reminiscent of a coin, and have been issued by a local merchant for exchange or advertising purposes. Our old Anglo-Saxon word "token" has been re-defined. Stricter definitions are "doomed," according to the author. We are in debt to him for this exercise in creative etymology.

Old photos and ads dress up the narratives. The commentaries provide a historic context for some entries, although at times it is difficult to tell when the background paragraphs have ended and new listings have started.

One problem which dogs Krause token publications is the meandering, chatty text. Too often it comes off as self-centered and condescending. Chapters derived from Rulau's several books display this tendency more than others.

Many times narratives are given space for reasons that are not clear. For example, on page 108 the text for Doremus, Dryden & Nixon tokens uses a quarter page. Other entries get one or two lines, or none. The Doremus story is interesting, but does it belong in the middle of a ready reference? Or is the volume not such? Someone or a committee has to decide.

The two sections on Civil War tokens are spartan in comparison, possibly too bare. Few photos were used and no text. The looseness characteristic of other chapters is mercifully absent. Using a random group of *storecard* and *patriotic tokens*, I tested the two. I found entries for nearly all of the storecards, but had to turn to Fuld's *Patriotic Civil War Tokens* to identify the



others. Classification of the patriotic civil war tokens depends almost entirely on well-defined illustrations which are inadequate in this work.

There is little doubt that Russell Rulau is one of the pioneers of American token collecting, and that he knows the classic United States series as few others do. Unfortunately the manner in which he imparts his knowledge is rarely well-organized. I am no expert on the American series, especially not on those issued before 1870. On the other hand, I have developed enough token catalogs to know what issues are involved in making a satisfactory presentation.

Perhaps Chet Krause and Cliff Mishler feel that they can make up for the author's efforts using their superior production and distribution capabilities. They probably can, especially in a society that too often measures excellence by the volume of sales. I hope they will opt for something better.

I recommend that the book be reduced in size to include only the Early American, Hard Times, Mid- to Late-19th Century Storecards and Civil War Tokens; edit the hell out of the commentaries, and leave the other collectibles until later. If the catalog is left as is, which is the path of least resistance, then it should be re-titled *Standard Catalog of United States Exonumia*, especially since Russell Rulau claims in the introduction to have coined that term.

For a compilation that is a glorified rough draft, I do not recommend its purchase, at least not for \$45. American and other English-reading collectors deserve more.

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*Standard Catalog of United States Tokens 1700-1900* by Russell Rulau, 1994, 824pp., perfect binding, Krause Publications, Iola, Wisconsin 54990, \$45.00

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# ARROWHEADS AND PING-PONG BALLS

BY **RUS STOLLING**

This author has often been accused of having an only slightly higher than average grasp of the obvious. It is precisely that talent that has led to this choice of topic. Bear in mind, as you read, that what follows is based on careful observation, thoughtful deduction, a generous dollop of speculation, and precious little academic research.

This rambling account attempts to address an inquiry made of me by a young member of my own family—my five-year old son, David. The question: why are coins round?

The answer should be fairly obvious to the experienced observer. (It was baseball guru Yogi Berra who pointed out that “you can observe a lot by just watching.”—words I have taken to heart and live by.) Square coins, triangular coins, or coins of other shapes with corners would poke holes in your pockets after a while. And they just don’t roll worth a darn.

Triangular coins could really do some immediate damage. Imagine trying to walk around town with the equivalent of a pocket full of little metal arrowheads, for instance. Pennies would be more than a nuisance, and half-dollars would be near lethal! Square coins might be less damaging because their corners are less acute. (That’s a scientific word that means “not as sharply pointed.”) A coin with five sides and five corners would be even less damaging, but notice that the more sides and corners you have, the more nearly circular the shape is. So probably, even if coins had started out as squares, they would have evolved into circles in time, anyway.

Have you ever tried to roll a square or a triangle? No matter how steep the slope, those shapes just won’t move downhill more than a couple of diameters before they stop and fall right over! How do you think anything other than a round coin could work in a vending machine? You’d have to slide ’em in flat on their sides. Even then, every now and then one would get in there cockeyed and jam up the works. I’m sure that those farsighted Lydians who invented coinage were already thinking about that when they punched that first electrum stater.

It has been said that the more we know, the more we realize there is to know. Even so, as we answer one question, another arises. If a circle is a good shape for a coin, wouldn’t a sphere be even better? (The great teachers of history are reputed on occasion to have answered a question with a question—I’m going to give it a shot right here.) If you think a pocketful of quarters is bulky, what if you had a dollar-fifty in coins shaped like ping-pong balls? What if you only had one lke dollar in your pocket, but it was shaped like a golf ball? (Mae West might just as well have said, “is that a dollar in your pocket, or are you just glad to see me?”) If coins were balls instead of discs, a roll of pennies would be a yard long! You’d have to roll your Morgans in

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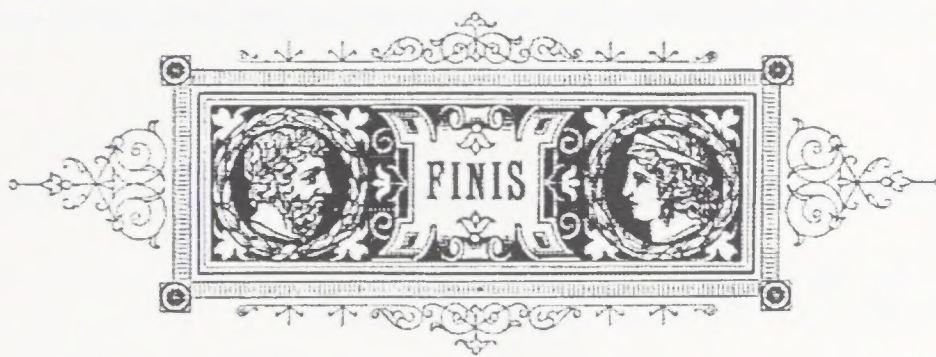
*Rus Stolling is the current Editor of CSNA’s CALCOIN NEWS. This article was reprinted with permission from the newsletter of the Fresno Numismatic Society.*



mailing tubes! So, common sense tells us that round, and flat, is best for coins, so you can roll 'em one way, and stack 'em the other.

So—having resolved the issue of why coins are round, let me add that not all coins are round. Both England and Mexico issue a seven-sided coin. The sides of the coins are curved such that when the coin is measured across its diameter at any point, the diameter is as constant as if the coin were round. Thus, although not round, the coin can roll, and so can be used in coin-operated machines.

Several Middle Eastern countries issue coins of irregular shape. I have a square one (with rounded corners, for safety, probably) from India, and a couple with rippled edges. The causes for the irregularity in shape are—and I read this somewhere, so it must be true—so that those who are illiterate can know the coin's value by its shape, and those who are extremely weak of eyesight can tell the coins one from the other by touch. I might add that both coin types are obsolete (pre-vending machine era). And that's the truth.





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